

Warren Zevon displays violent but winning way at Peabody's

By Anastasia Pantsios

Singer/songwriter Warren Zevon has written numerous tunes that have oozed their way into the consciousness of rock 'n' roll lovers. They're songs marked by an almost manic intensity and a slightly skewed point of view.

Despite his reputation as a writer, Zevon has been without a recording contract or a band for quite a while. Last summer, he played a solo set here at Blossom Music Center, opening to Stevie Nicks. On that occasion, Nicks' guitar player and Zevon's old colleague, Waddy Wachtel, joined him for a few numbers.

Out on the road again, Zevon blew into Peabody's DownUnder for two shows Monday night, this time quite alone except for an agile road manager who handed him one or another of his 12 string

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guitars. He played a somewhat short set composed of some of his best known tunes, and a couple of new ones as well.

Zevon's bizarre and often violent tunes actually translate rather well to a solo format. They are also well served by his slashing guitar playing (he always uses a 12-string, giving the accompaniment a full, jangling sound) and his pounding piano style.

It would be hard for an evening of songs like Zevon's to have no momentum, but he kept things moving by playing alternate sets of two or three songs at the piano and up front with guitar. He opened with a rousing "Lawyers, Guns and Money," and then headed down memory lane for

such favorites as "Poor Pitiful Me" (made famous by Linda Ronstadt,) "Desperadoes Under the Eaves" and "Roland the Thomas Gunner."

A couple of new tunes ("Boom Boom Mancini" and "Trouble Waiting to Happen," co-written by J.D. Souther) were very much in the typical Zevon style: brash, frontal and cynical. (In fact, "Trouble Waiting to Happen" sounded uncannily like his infamous "Excitable Boy," one of the best known tunes he did not perform this set.)

Zevon's gravelly voice is not the world's most versatile instrument, but he manages to wring a lot out of it. His singing, like his guitar and piano playing, is so well adapted to his peculiar style of song writing that you don't really notice his limitations.